

Are you at risk for complacency?



Complacency affects every workplace and employee to different degrees. It often shows up as a feeling of security that leads to a lack of awareness of your surroundings. Though you might think you are immune, it can be as simple as letting your guard down, losing focus or not looking for hazards as often as you should. Depending on your role, this can create serious risks for yourself and others in your workplace. While no one plans to become complacent, we all have to be on the lookout for it, and being an engaged worker can help.

COMPLACENCY RISKS

Safe, engaged employees often work in-the-moment, meaning they are focused on their tasks and their surroundings. Complacent workers, however, may perform their jobs in an "auto-pilot" mode, moving from step to step without thinking critically about their actions. This can increase the potential for risks and injuries, and it can happen regardless of age or experience. Whether it's the result of spending too much time on a task or getting too comfortable with a daily routine, we can all work to prevent complacency risks.

SPOT THE SIGNS OF COMPLACENCY

No one knows you better than yourself, but complacency can mean you don't see the dangers right in front of you. To stay safe, you must learn to spot the signs of complacency in yourself:

- Dissatisfaction with your work and/or lack of motivation
- Missing steps in work processes
- Frequent near-misses or incidents

Since it can be difficult to recognize these signs in yourself, you should also learn to spot them in your co-workers. The more you learn to see these signs in others, the easier it may be to see them in yourself. In addition to the above signs, look for:

- Changes in attitude
- Noticeable increase or decrease in communication
- Tardiness for meetings or shifts

Complacency isn't just about losing focus on the task at hand, it can also come up in terms of expectations. If you work closely with a co-worker or team and you get used to their performance, you might expect that same performance each time and neglect to check in on them. Those expectations can create risks if they cause you to overlook the signs of complacency in your co-workers.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

If complacency is a rut which many workers fall into, then employee engagement can be the key to getting them out of it. Simple steps to regain focus and invest in safety can reduce everyone's risks:

- Set yourself up for success at work by consciously focusing on your tasks
- Recognize and dismiss distractions when they come up
- Look for improvements in your routine or the way you approach your tasks
- If possible, consider changing some elements of your schedule for the day; the change could help you focus and keep you from falling into "auto-pilot" mode

In addition to getting yourself engaged, find ways to do the same for your co-workers so you are all working safely:

- Make safety a part of your routine by including co-workers in safety talks and inspections
- Encourage your co-workers to talk through the steps of a task with you, even if you have lots of experience working together
- Offer to help your co-workers with a task, and point out any apparent risks so they aren't overlooked

Don't ignore the signs of complacency in yourself, and don't be afraid to voice your concerns when you see them in your fellow employees. Everyone is susceptible to these risks, and sometimes we need an outside perspective to notice how our behaviors have changed.

